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Original Citation

Monro, Surya (2013) Theorising Gender Diversity: Current trans, future directions. In: 'Trans' as Everyday Culture: Social networks, social movements, everyday lives and everyday repertoires, 23rd May 2013, Warwick, UK. (Unpublished)

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Theorising Gender Diversity: Current trans, future directions

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Introduction



- **Key projects:**
 - Transgender in the UK in the 1990s (26 in depth interviews with a range of contributors)
 - Organisational Change and Resistance: LGBT Equalities in Local Government project (with Professor Diane Richardson as PI, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council) (4 strands, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2007-2010)
 - Bisexual Identities (25 in depth interviews, current, plus research in Columbia)
 - Also conducted some fieldwork with gender/sexually diverse people in India (funded by the Leverhulme Foundation, 2003)

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My key contributions

- 3 approaches to gender diversity (Monro 2005)
 - An expansion of ‘male’ and ‘female’ categories
 - Moving beyond sex and gender
 - Gender pluralism
- Citizenship approaches (Monro 2003, Monro and Warren 2004)
- Now working on bisexuality and gender diversity (monograph forthcoming with Palgrave MacMillan 2014)

Organisation of this session



- History of categorisation
- Queer – question
- Postcolonial approaches – question
- Trans citizenship and materialism – question
- Conclusion and discussion

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Tracing the history

- Importance of imperialism, classed/raced/gendered hierarchies in the formation of the categories of homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual – the Victorian sexologists contributed to the project of classification as did (and do) medical approaches to gender diversity
- *Capitalism demands specialization and categorisation for most efficient operation and is inextricably intertwined with patterns of social organisation beyond the realm of the strictly economic (Hall 1996: 101)*



Queer and its discontents

- Useful: grassroots activism (as well as privileged theorists), deconstruction of binaries, dislocation of sex, gender and sexuality, use as umbrella term avoids LGBT categorisations, and 'resistance to the regimes of the normal' (Warner 1993 xxvi)

I tend to identify as queer, because it covers a lot more than just whether I am attracted to men and women, it covers a lot more than which gender I am attracted to. It covers a lot more about the rest of my sexuality as well (Interviewer: can you say what you mean by queer?) It is about the whole of my sexuality and lifestyle, not just my sexual orientation. Its about, well I am attracted to various people, various genders. We have a poly relationship, so its not just a conventional marriage or a conventional partnership, a monogamous partnership. And I am quite active within the trans community and to a lesser extent the LGBT community as well, and it covers that (Lee, bisexuality project)

Queer and its discontents cont

- BUT: 'The newly emerging "Queer Theory" is an attempt to get beyond the gendered and sexual practices of the social world, yet it continually harks back to those categories which it seeks to undo; male, female, straight, bisexual' (Plummer 1995 xvi)
- AND; can be seen as vanguardist, elitist, stigmatised (not reclaimed) for some, erasing of diversity
- *...I must be queer as I am not straight, but sometimes Queer Theory feels heady and quite extreme and I can't relate to it (Andy, bisexuality project)*
- Question: How useful is queer theory and politics for understanding gender diversity in your field/area of practice?

Postcolonial thoughts

- ‘From a Western viewpoint, sexuality constitutes an essential or core attribute of identity; individuals are said to have fixed sexual identities or orientations. Sexuality as it is understood in the United States and Europe, however, often bears little resemblance to sexual relationships and practices across cultures’ (Blackwood 2000: 223)
- The term ‘trans’ or transgender’ is being used in some Southern contexts – striated by space, locality, class and caste, gender (see for example Monro 2010)
- BUT see <http://www.genderdynamix.org.za/about/>
- Question: What does considering gender diversity in Southern contexts mean for UK-based thinking and practice?

Trans citizenship

- Basic human rights – safety, freedom from hate crime, right to work and a family life, freedom from discrimination etc.
- Inequalities and the drive for citizenship
- Debates about the remit of citizenship; assimilationist/radical issues
- Debates about how to achieve citizenship
Including via different forms of democracy
- Particularist/universalist debates

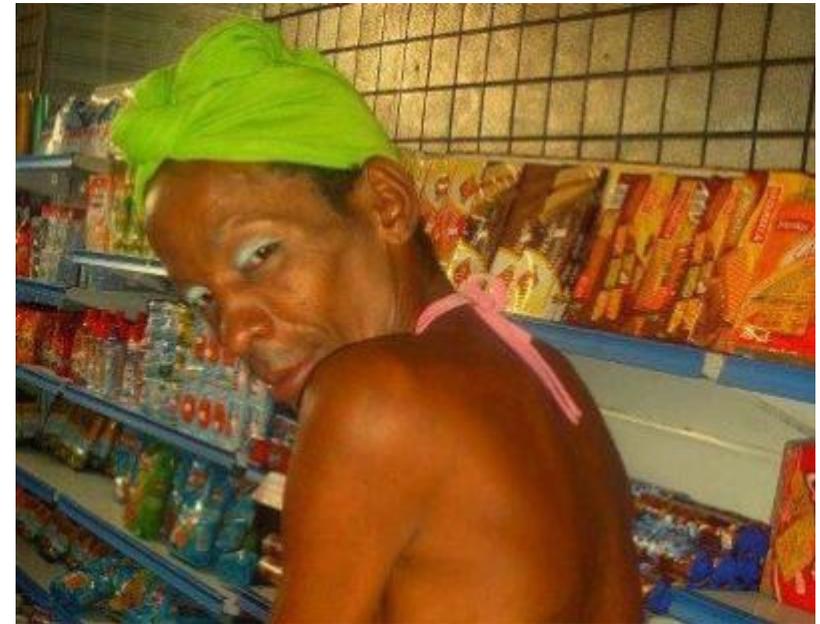


Image: Leach 2012. Madonna, trans women murdered in Brazil in 2012

A materialist turn

- There is a ‘move towards materiality within deconstructive approaches to gender and sexuality...While influenced by poststructuralist deconstructions of binary categorisations, such a framework maps the formations of power within and through gender and sexual categories’ (Hines 2010: 13).
- A concern with lived experience and context
- Can use to address material realities and inequalities (socio-economic, embodiment, conflict, violence, power)
- Allows for the development of a social model of gender diversity
- Contextualised approach useful for developing nationality-sensitive analysis
- Question: How do materialist approaches ‘speak to’ your work as academics, practitioners, policy makers?

Taking things forwards

- Accepting gender diversity provokes seismic shift in mainstream models of gender and sexuality
- Full citizenship and social justice for all gender diverse individuals has major consequences for our institutions (law, family models, relationship models, faith organisations, lesbian and gay identity-based movements, etc)
- There are elisions and erasures in UK-based discourses especially around:
 - Intersex, gender fluid, androgynous, non gendered and multiple gender people
 - Diversity – why is there so little discussion of race and ethnicity, class, nationality etc?
- Intersectionality theory may provide one route forwards (McCall 2005, Monro 2010, Richardson and Monro 2012)

Website for ESRC project



- <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/selg/>

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